

SV 4017

D6

Copy 1

An Appeal

TO



Young Ministers.

BY

Rev. C. H. Dobbs.



Presbyterian Committee of Publication, Richmond, Va.

1

2

AN APPEAL
TO
YOUNG MINISTERS.

BY
REV. C. H. DOBBS.



42533

an!

17
1842

A stylized handwritten signature or mark, possibly a monogram, consisting of a large 'P' and a smaller 'D' or similar character.

A small, dark, handwritten mark or signature, possibly a cross or a stylized letter.

Richmond, Va.:
PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.
1895.

A long, horizontal, handwritten mark or signature, possibly a stylized 'N' or a flourish.

BV 4017
.I6



COPYRIGHTED, 1895,

BY

JAS. K. HAZEN, *Secretary of Publication.*

PRINTED BY
WHITTET & SHEPPERSON,
RICHMOND, VA.

AN APPEAL TO YOUNG MINISTERS.

THE ROAD TO MINISTERIAL SUCCESS POINTED
OUT.

My Dear Brother: In the providence of God, you are called to the highest, holiest, and most responsible calling known amongst men.

You are to be an ambassador for God, a minister to represent the Lord Jesus, in his overtures to his enemies and his instructions to his people. You are to be the mouth-piece of God.

You are set for the rise and fall of many. The results of your ministry will be as far-reaching as eternity. Will you be a reed shaken with the wind? Will you be great in the sight of men, or will you be great in the sight of the Lord?

4 AN APPEAL TO YOUNG MINISTERS.

Doubtless you appreciate the importance of making every essential preparation for this great work. You have spent many years in training your mind that you may grasp the mighty science of theology.

Perhaps you have already spent much time in its study, and you are nearing the end of a thorough course of training at the feet of eminent professors, and will soon enter the great fields whitening for the harvest.

Multitudes may wait upon your lips for instruction; they will expect you to take the banner of their Lord and lead them to victory; they will look to you to encourage their faith, confirm their hopes, and comfort their hearts.

Doubtless you realize to some extent the responsibility of standing between immortal souls and their God, as steward of the mysteries of God, of the manifold grace of God to give them their portion of meat in due season!

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with

him.” “And they that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever.” With strong faith and buoyant hope, you contemplate the glorious consummation of your life’s work—at a bound your imagination leaps over the seeding time, beyond the sunshine and the shadows of the growing period, and you are singing the harvest songs.

Will there be a harvest?—a crown bestud with stars? Will you prove an acceptable messenger, of whom the Father will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”? Or will you bring the Lord’s talent wrapped in the napkin of ignorance?

I take it for granted that you are a converted man, a man of prayer and faith; that your mind is well trained; that you are a gentleman, a man of your word, who fears God and not man; that you are familiar with the science of theology; that your motives in seeking the gospel ministry are pure—from love to God and man; that you depend upon the Holy Ghost to teach you. All this you may be and have, and it is more or less essential to success; and yet there is

6 AN APPEAL TO YOUNG MINISTERS.

one other thing, which if you lack you will fail just in proportion to that lack. I refer to a *thorough* and *accurate* acquaintance with God's word, *committed to memory and familiarized until it is upon the tongue's end.*

Consider :

I. As an ambassador, you must speak the words of God. God "hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." If our Lord spoke the words, the exact words, of the Father, shall not we also, who are his ambassadors? When Jonah was sent to Nineveh, God said to him, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." If he had preached any other words than those very words which God commanded him to preach, his mission would have failed. There is no safe way but to quote the exact words of Scripture. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the word of God, containing the instructions from the King of heaven which you are to deliver to the world.

If you do not know his message, it is impossible for you to deliver it. Ordinarily, the Spirit of God uses the word of God; and if you do not know his word, you cannot deliver it either in the letter or in the spirit. “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” So that, even though the Spirit be given you, he will not use you, you who must speak the words of God. It is a well-established principle of God’s government not to do for us what he has given us the ability to do ourselves. God does not give a knowledge of the word to those who will not study it; and no one can study the word of God as well as he who has it in his memory. Therefore a memory of God’s word is necessary to fit one to be an ambassador and to perform the duties thereof.

It is extremely perilous for an ambassador to forget, or to fail to carry out, his instructions. In First Kings xiii. we are told of an ambassador who allowed himself to be deceived, and followed the words of another

prophet instead of the words of God, and thereby forfeited his life. His epitaph was: "It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord."

II. As a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are to be a leader of the people, a captain of God's host, to receive and to have executed the orders of the King, and to fight the good fight of faith! Like Moses, you are to be the mouth of God unto the people. "I will be with thy mouth, and will teach thee what thou shalt say." God will put words in your mouth, as he did in the mouth of Jeremiah, and you are to warn the wicked and the righteous. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman; . . . therefore hear the word at my mouth." Failing to speak God's message, *their blood will be upon you!*

As a leader of God's hosts, Joshua forgot the King's command, and made a league with the Gibeonites. It might be well for you to study the fearful consequences which followed in the generations after.

As a soldier of Jesus Christ, you are to fight the battles of the Lord. Your weapon is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the

word of God." "The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow;" they stand with their weapons in hand. "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

To have the word of God thoroughly committed to memory is to have a drawn sword, a bent bow; anything less than having it at the tongue's end may mean a weapon not within reach, to fight as one that beateth the air.

Our Lord met Satan with a drawn sword, and, since there is no discharge (a casting off of weapons) in that war, not to know God's word insures failure in the war in proportion to our ignorance of it. What utter folly for a soldier to go to battle unarmed! This you will do if you do not know the precise words of Scripture.

III. You are to be a light in the world. Under your ministry, the people which sit in darkness should see a great light. When our Lord was upon the earth he said, "I am the light of the world"; as he sent out his servants he said, "Ye are the light of the world." He ordained that we should

have this treasure in earthen vessels. His servants, like the moon and the stars, shed reflected light. Night is upon the world; but his servants, by reason of their exalted position, are the children of the day; they walk in the light, live in the light, and reflect the light upon the world. "The entrance of thy words giveth light. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path."

When Gideon's three hundred went forth against the enemies of Israel, each man had a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a lamp within the pitcher (earthen vessel). When the pitcher was broken, the light flashed out, the trumpet sounded, the enemy was routed:

Oh, my brother, get rid of self, of pride, of bigotry, of vanity, of selfishness; be filled with the word of God, with the Spirit of God, with the love of God. Lay your body upon God's altar, and, as it is broken in his service, how gloriously the truth will flash out, how grandly the trumpet shall sound, how utterly the enemy shall be routed!

If, however, you are not familiar with God's word, the light that is in you will be

darkness. How terrific the thought that you may be a blind leader of the blind! "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" How fearful the sarcasm, Walk in the sparks that ye have kindled!!!

IV. In a little while you are to be legally authorized to preach the gospel of Christ, "by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." Under similar circumstances, when Timothy was ordained, Paul urged him "to hold fast the FORM OF SOUND WORDS." Paul expected great things from Timothy, for his mother and grandmother had taught him the word of God: "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. . . . All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Paul's charge was to "preach the word." What would Paul's disappointment have been if he had heard of Timothy's taking a skeleton from some "Helps to Preachers," and filling it from commentaries and

suggestions from a cyclopædia of illustrations?

“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” “The Spirit of God is the sole agent; the word of God is the sole instrument.” How can you preach the word unless you know it? How can you hold fast the form of sound words, if you do not commit those words to memory over and over and over again? The sayings of Christ, if heard (held in your mind) and practiced, will give you a sure foundation. They will be in you a well of water, a fountain of blessing. Your commission from the Lord Jesus reads: Go, preach my gospel. You cannot preach this gospel unless you are thoroughly conversant with its terms. You may preach a gospel that is not a gospel. It is very dangerous for a minister to presume to do what the word and the Spirit alone can do, as Moses and Aaron found to their sorrow. (Num. xx. 10-12.)

Paul says: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

V. In your vocation, you are to be ready always "to give an answer to every man that asketh of you a reason of the hope that is in you."

You are to meet with all classes of men, under all kinds of circumstances; if you are familiar with the word of God, the Spirit will always guide you in rightly dividing the word; this is the only sure method of warning, rebuking, reproving, stopping the mouths of gainsayers, comforting the saints, and removing difficulties. If you do not know the word, you cannot expect the Spirit to guide you in its use. "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

It is true that all men are more impressed by the very words of Scripture than by anything else, and they expect you to rightly divide the word to them. If you cannot quote the Scriptures, or if you misquote them, you are at once discredited, and your influence is marred.

VI. You are to be an under-shepherd to feed the flock of God, to lead them into the green pastures and beside the still waters. Unless you are familiar with these pleasant

resorts, having often resorted thither, unless you have the word of God abiding in you, you may lead the flock into dangerous pit-falls, in barren places, among ravenous wolves.

VII. You are to go forth as God's husbandman, bearing precious seeds. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters;" "in the morning sow thy seed, in the evening withhold not thy hand." You are neither to observe the wind, nor to regard the clouds, for you do not know which will prosper. Now, the seed is the word of God. If you do not know the word of God, you have no seed to sow, and you may sow tares.

VIII. As a workman, you are to "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." You are to lay the foundation and build thereon, and also to build upon the foundations laid by others. When you use the word of God, you will build upon the foundation, gold, silver, precious stones; if you use anything else, hay, wood, stubble—all which must be tried in the fire—your works will be burned. How dreadful the thought!

IX. You are to be a scribe, and, as such, should be thoroughly furnished, bringing out treasures new and old. If the treasures of God's word are engrafted upon your mind, fastened in your memory, you will be able, by the Spirit's guidance, to bring forth the old and the new in the most wonderful combinations, to the edification and instruction of God's saints.

As a ruler and a judge in the courts of the Lord, how are you to rule wisely and to give justice unless you know the law? As a bishop, how shall you confirm the saints when you are ignorant of the truth? As a Christian, as a child of God, as a servant of the King officially commissioned as a witness, as an ensample, as an ambassador, as a soldier, as a light in the world, as a minister of the gospel, as under-shepherd, as bishop, as steward of the mysteries of God, you must acknowledge that you will be powerless without vital union with Christ. You must be a man of faith, one who communes with God, who has fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; receiving constant instruction from God, holding constant communion with him, and

receiving constant strength from him. "If ye abide in me, and MY WORDS ABIDE IN YOU, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "If a man love me, HE WILL KEEP MY WORDS, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." If you know God's word, if you keep his precepts, if you walk in his commandments, your prayers will be answered, the Holy Spirit will be with you; your heart will overflow with God's love shed abroad therein; and you will be a wise minister, a faithful servant, a loving child, a happy man.

In the light of these scriptural truths, will you not consider carefully the great responsibility of your high calling, and give yourself earnestly to the study of God's word? Otherwise, as an ambassador, you may make terms which your King will discredit, who may recall you, and you may become a cast-away because you did not know your orders. As a soldier, you may lead the host of God to danger, and yourself to disgrace, unless you are girded with truth, have the drawn sword of the Spirit, and remember your

marching orders. As a light-bearer, your light may be hid, and you may be a blind leader of the blind, because the word of God does not abide in you. As a commissioned minister of the gospel, a watchman on the towers of Zion, you may fail to give warning, owing to your ignorance of the terms of salvation. As a minister of God, you may discourage men because you do not know where the anchor of hope is cast. As a sower, you may fill the garden of the Lord with weeds because you did not bear precious seeds. As a shepherd, you may starve God's flock.

Now, my brother, believing, as I do, that your life may be a failure, and your ministry a shipwreck—with all on board lost—without a knowledge of God's word, that your enjoyment of religion, your success as a minister, depend largely upon your perfect and accurate knowledge of his word, will you bear with me while I illustrate these truths, and show you what it is possible for you to accomplish in this line?

Why were Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Knox, Whitefield, the Wesleys, and other great reformers, men of such power? They

were familiar with God's word. What was the secret of John Bunyan's (the tinker) power? Why was he able to write such books as *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*, and to leave such a name behind him? His thorough acquaintance with God's word. What is the secret of Mr. Moody's great power and that of all the great revivalists who have been successful in winning souls? They know God's word by heart; and in proportion as they know it, and are filled with the Spirit, they are successful.

You have had great advantages. In your early life all your surroundings were above those of thousands who have succeeded. You have had years of instruction under men of learning and piety. You have had the word of God before you. Christ has promised to be with you always. The Holy Spirit, to reveal the words of Christ, abides in you. You are born of almighty grace, and are about to be sent out with a gospel which is the power of God, with the authority of the church of God.

Your God, your church, your parents, perhaps, have done all they could do to make

you a useful minister of God. How sad it will be to see one with all these opportunities a failure!

Now, if you fail, it will be because you are too sluggish and indolent to lay up in your memory the word of God.

There are in the New Testament 7,959 verses; in the Old Testament, 23,214, making a total of 31,173. Of these, there are, perhaps, 10,000 verses that it would not be profitable to commit thoroughly to memory. Any person of an ordinary capacity for memorizing can, by giving an hour each day, commit five verses to memory, and review those previously committed until thoroughly known. This would be over 1,800 verses in one year; and in the course of fifteen or sixteen years, allowing for necessary interruptions, would give a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures; so much so that the whole could be recommitted every year or two.

After a few hundred verses are thoroughly known, you will begin to appreciate the new power you will have in prayer, in sermonizing, and in ministering to the Lord's people. And as your knowledge increases in amount

and accuracy, your power will increase in a geometrical ratio. Whole sermons will flash over you, and in the midst of your preaching burning thoughts will come crowding one upon the heels of another. Your prayers will no longer be dull and heavy, but will flow forth with the mighty power of the Spirit. You will have the confidence of the people, and they will flock to you for counsel as the thirsty people seek the fountain of water.

It is well for you to pause at the threshold of your new life, and to ask yourself the questions, Why have so many of my predecessors failed comparatively? How comes it that so many are powerless for good, with all the advantages of a long course of training, with piety and zeal, sound in mind, with many noble gifts and high purposes? How little they accomplish! How circumscribed their influence! Shall I be like them?

You will be, as sure as you do not know the word of the Lord. You will be a broken cistern, a rainless cloud, a puff of smoke. Therefore you ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which you have heard,

lest at any time you should let them slip (or run out, as a leaking vessel).

How shall you escape the consequences of allowing the word of God to slip out of your memory? Will you not make this word of God yours by possessing it in your memory? As you do this, pray for the Spirit, and God will send one of his seraphim to touch your lips; and wherever the call may be, you will say, "Here am I; send me."

May the Lord open your heart to receive the truth, enlighten your mind to understand the truth, strengthen your efforts to obtain and to hold the truth!

Go forth, my brother, weeping, bearing precious seed, and doubtless you will come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. May your crown be gloriously bestud with stars! May many rise up and call you blessed! May the Master say to you in that day, "Come, ye blessed of my Father"! "Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 022 168 943 4